

57-0500

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 Date: 14 DEC 1978  
 By: 023

**SUBJECT:           Functional Furniture**

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Reference (a) requested that this office undertake a study to determine the kind of office furniture which would best suit the needs of this Agency, make the best use of office space, and provide for protection against the security hazards inherent in the drawer space in conventional desks which are generally not necessary and not used by our people.

1. Informal discussions with representatives of the General Services Administration disclosed that the existing furniture of the Agency could be disposed of through the Federal Supply Service of G.S.A. and that the Federal Supply Service would be willing to support the position that the availability of this furniture would represent an overall savings to the Government by eliminating the need for G.S.A. to procure furniture in the amount of this inventory to satisfy the requirements of other Government agencies.

2. General Services Administration indicated that there is some precedent in the Government for the utilization of functionally designed furniture and they would not oppose action by this Agency to initiate a procurement program to replace the standard Government furniture with furniture of a design better suited to our needs. On this basis, it was concluded that the possibility of procuring functionally designed furniture was sufficiently favorable to justify undertaking a thorough study to select a design and establish accurate quantity requirements.

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3. Ten leading manufacturers were consulted for the primary purpose of determining their capability of manufacturing desk tops for use in conjunction with an acceptable two-drawer safe-type filing cabinet. As a result of these discussions, the list of companies was reduced to three, none of which could make any commitment as to their capability of producing an acceptable filing cabinet, but whose products appeared to be most readily adaptable to utilization in conjunction with an acceptable safe produced by another manufacturer.

4. The Mosler Safe Company has submitted a five-drawer legal size non-insulated manipulation proof lock, safe-type filing cabinet to the Bureau of Standards for testing against security specifications established by the Federal Committee on Security Equipment. As a result of these tests, the Bureau of Standards has requested G.S.A. to revise the standards for safe-type filing cabinets and place the Mosler safe on the Federal Supply Schedule. The representatives of the Mosler Safe Company have expressed a willingness to submit plans for a similar two-drawer safe-type filing cabinet which will meet specifications necessary for its utilization in conjunction with modular desk tops. If successful, this effort would satisfy the principal requirement of this Agency with respect to functional furniture better suited to our needs, and permit a savings of approximately 6 square feet for each conventional safe file which could be eliminated thereby.

### III. DISCUSSION

1. Any advantages which might accrue to the Agency through the use of modular or functionally designed furniture can only be evaluated in relation to the most effective possible layout in the space where it will be utilized. Its value to this Agency, therefore, must be determined in relation to its most effective utilization planned in conformance with the internal design of the Agency building as finally approved. This factor, in addition to the determination in reference (b) that funds necessary for furniture procurement would be requested independently from any request for additional building construction funds, was interpreted as effectively separating the problem of furniture from the building planning. On this basis, it was determined impractical to attempt to give any special consideration to the possible effects of modular furniture on the building design. It was further assumed that any request to the Bureau of the Budget and the Congress for funds to procure new furniture will necessarily be based upon a clear demonstration of advantages to the Government in terms of more effective space utilization, efficiency, and

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functional practicability, particularly in terms of the general uselessness and the security hazards of desk drawers.

2. The Building Planning Staff believes that approximately 75 square feet is a reasonable area for a cubicle created by the use of part-height partitions with a door for occupancy by one person using a 5' desk, a chair, a visitor's chair, a two or four-drawer safe file, and a telephone stand or table. Occupancy at this rate would provide approximately 45 square feet for furniture and 30 square feet for circulation. The Building Planning Staff indicates that this area will be adjusted as necessary to meet the requirements of operational methods, or to accommodate additional furniture or equipment as required. The DD/I and DD/P Liaison Officers have expressed their conviction, based upon experience in their areas, that approximately 80 square feet, is about the minimum in comfort and convenience per employee using present furniture. They believe that the savings which might be realized where a two or four-drawer safe could be eliminated by using two-drawer safes in conjunction with modular desk tops might permit a reduction in occupancy from 80 square feet to approximately 75 square feet with no loss in employee efficiency and morale. Savings which might be realized by utilization of modular furniture in conjunction with two-drawer safe pedestals would not permit a reduction below the 75 square feet, but might permit the same amount of, or a minimum increase in, the circulation space that the individual now has in 80 square feet with the present furniture.

3. While savings in individual units occupied at the rate of 75 square feet per person would not permit additional space to become available for other purposes, but would be limited to the provision of additional circulation space for the occupant, it is conceivable that in areas where multiple occupancy provides a more effective performance of the functions involved, greater savings may be involved, and these savings may permit more people to be housed. In either case, the value of these savings and the advantages which would accrue to the Agency therefrom cannot be evaluated until the final size and shape of the building has been approved and it is possible to develop layouts conforming to the internal design of the building for purposes of comparing occupancy by standard furniture with modular furniture.

4. Appendix A shows comparative estimated item costs between units of present standard furniture which could be replaced by units of modular furniture based upon assumptions for its proper utilization developed by the DD/I Liaison Officer and projected to the rest of the Agency.

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**IV. CONCLUSION**

The actual requirements for functionally designed furniture can only be determined by careful, detailed evaluation of the requirements of all of the elements of the Agency. The effectiveness of its utilization can only be evaluated in relation to detailed planning of the various combinations of its elements in the space where it will be used. It has been considered impractical, therefore, to develop plans leading to final conclusions and recommendations until the size, shape, and occupancy of the building have been determined.

**V. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Furniture Committee proceed with this study as follows:

1. Select manufacturer's products which appear most practical and desirable to meet our needs.
2. When the final shape and size of the building have been determined, obtain a sample layout from the Building Planning Staff showing effective utilization of standard office furniture.
3. Submit layouts of standard furniture in sterile form to the manufacturers selected, requesting that the manufacturer show the effectiveness of the utilization of the modular furniture on an overlay for comparison with the standard furniture.
4. If on the basis of previously listed recommendations, it seems desirable that modular furniture be procured for the Agency, a sufficient quantity of this furniture including partial partitions be procured to equip a standard area and tests in use be made.

**JAMES A. GARRISON**  
Director of Logistics

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**CONCUR:**

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Chair	Committee	Date
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**APPROVED:**

*19 Feb 57*  
Date

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**L. K. WHITE**  
Deputy Director  
(Support)

**Distribution:**

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**OL/PD/MIM:ECG:djc** (15 February 1957)

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